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ABSTRACT

A series of recommendations is presented by the Southern Regional Education Board to suggest specific ways that two-year colleges can better serve their students. Introductory sections discuss the importance of two-year colleges within higher education; problems facing undergraduate education (e.g., undergraduate study and degrees lack meaning, the "quality gap" between selective and less selective institutions has widened over the past few years, and the effects of open admissions have not been addressed squarely); and the need for stronger placement policies for students entering college. Next, 24 recommendations are presented in the areas of: (1) student assessment and placement in associate degree programs; (2) the establishment of linkages between two-year colleges and high schools through a joint coordinating structure; (3) the effectiveness of programs in the two-year colleges; (4) the improvement of undergraduate education for the transfer student; (5) the strengthening of collaboration and communication between faculty from two-year colleges and senior institutions; and (6) the improvement of cooperation between two- and four-year colleges. (EJV)

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Access to Quality Undergraduate Education in the Two-Year College

A Report to The Southern Regional Education Board by its Commission for Educational Quality

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Access to Quality Undergraduate Education in the Two-Year College

A Statement by the President of the Southern Regional Education Board

Half of the nation's freshmen are enrolled in two-year colleges. In some SREB states, over two-thirds of teacher education graduates begin college at a two-year institution. And for many high school students, the two-year college is the "local" college—the college which makes it possible, both geographically and financially, for many students to attend who otherwise would not have the opportunity.

These reasons underscore why SREB's Commission for Educational Quality is giving special attention to improving the quality of education in two-year colleges. In *Access to Quality Undergraduate Education in the Two-Year College,* the Commission has recommended:

- Placement standards for students after college admission
- Strong partnerships with high schools
- Assessing college students' performance
- Improving transfer programs

Placement Standards for Students after College Admission

The quality of undergraduate education in two-year colleges depends in large measure upon how two-year colleges determine that students, who represent a wide range of academic preparation and skills, are ready to begin the coursework required for an associate degree. By having standards for entry into courses for degree credit, both students and the college benefit—students, because the chance for success is increased; the college, because it can maintain open admission while raising standards for undergraduate education.

SREB has recommended that for both occupational training and bachelor's degree transfer programs each two-year college develop standards and assessments for placing students into degree-credit study. The standards should be based on the level of skills required to begin each type of program. Faculty should be primarily responsible for developing these standards and assessments, and the standards should be evaluated periodically to be sure they are current and valid. There should be state-level coordination of the efforts of the individual institutions to assure that a common meaning for degree-credit study exists among all institutions.

Those students who do not qualify for immediate placement into degree-credit courses should be placed in remedial programs. They would receive no credit toward the degree in these programs, but their chances for earning a degree would be significantly improved. Standards for completion of remedial programs should require that students demonstrate they have achieved the skills needed to begin degree-credit study. These exit standards should be as high as the original standards used to place students into degree-credit courses.

Strong Partnerships with High Schools

A majority of high school seniors plan to attend college, but only about 35 percent of all high school students are in programs to prepare for college study. Two-year colleges need to establish or strengthen partnerships with the high schools. They need to send students clear messages about the knowledge and skills necessary to begin college-level, degree-credit coursework.

SREB recommends that the faculties in both schools and two-year colleges establish ways to inform high school students about admission and placement standards and assessments. A new form of assessment is needed—one that will let high school students and teachers know whether students are on schedule to begin college. This college-preparation assessment would identify weaknesses while students are still in high school and assist in eliminating the weaknesses before students graduate and enter college.

These partnerships should also:

- Support programs to motivate and challenge students and recognize outstanding academic achievements of high school students through scholarship or fee waiver programs.
- Provide help to students who may have personal, social, or financial obstacles that make it difficult to succeed at a two-year college.
- Bring together faculty from the two-year colleges and schools for in-service training.
- Produce reports that provide information about the high school preparation and performance of college freshmen so that schools will have concrete evidence for making needed adjustments in their curricular and counseling programs.

Assessing College Students' Performance

Course grades are not consistent from one institution to another and no longer demonstrate that students have actually mastered specified competencies. Therefore, to improve the quality of undergraduate education and give meaning to the associate degree, two-year colleges need to establish standards that mark progress through undergraduate study.

Most two-year colleges offer three types of degrees—the Associate in Arts (A.A.) and the Associate in Science (A.S.), which are generally academically-based programs; and the Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.), which is usually an occupationally-based curriculum. SREB recommends that two-year colleges develop separate performance standards for each degree and expect students to meet these standards, as measured by some form of systematic assessment, to be eligible to receive the associate degree. These standards should reflect the differences in the purposes and intended results of the various degree programs.

SREB also recommends that states establish, with input from institutional representatives, statewide minimum performance standards. States should require that all institutions meet or exceed these minimum, threshold standards.

Improving Transfer Programs

To improve the transferability of credits from two-year colleges to senior institutions, SREB makes three recommendations:

- States should require two-year and senior institutions to develop and agree on a core of lower-division courses that are equivalent in content.

- A joint statewide committee consisting of faculty and state representatives should identify the equivalent courses.
- Transfer credit for the core courses should be granted by all senior institutions.

There is growing concern about the quality of instruction that students receive in two-year college programs that prepare them to transfer to senior colleges and universities. Over the years, a number of studies based on grades in upper-division courses reported that, in general, two-year college transfer students did as well as students who began college at senior institutions. Now, however, two-year college students do not perform as well on standardized assessments as sophomores in four-year colleges and universities.

To address this concern, faculty and staff in the two-year colleges and senior institutions should:

- Jointly plan academic programs.
- Follow up on the progress of transfer students.
- Use student follow-up information in making program decisions and advising students.
- Clarify and periodically evaluate academic expectations and standards students are most likely to meet when they transfer to senior colleges and universities.
- Develop organized networks where faculty and staff in similar disciplines can share teaching approaches and subject content.

Two-year colleges have been an unqualified success in bringing college education within the geographic and financial reach of nearly all students. For this access to have the value expected by students and the public, two-year colleges must demonstrate that students are receiving a quality education. SREB's recommendations are intended to help assure that access *and* quality symbolize the two-year college.

Winfred L. Godwin
President
Southern Regional Education Board

Access to Quality Undergraduate Education in the Two-Year College, a report by the Southern Regional Education Board's Commission for Educational Quality, is available by sending $4.50 to:

Southern Regional Education Board
592 Tenth Street, NW
Atlanta, Georgia 30318-5790

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A Report to
The Southern Regional Education Board
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Foreword

More than any other kind of institution, two-year colleges have been responsible for providing widespread access to undergraduate education. Their success in opening higher education's doors to millions suggests that these colleges can meet the next challenge—raising standards in undergraduate education while continuing to increase access.

Leadership and initiative are badly needed if the integrity of the college degree is to be preserved and access is to have value. Higher and clearer standards for beginning and completing undergraduate education must be set and better ways found to assess student readiness for and performance in college. Strong links must be forged between colleges and the schools which will enable school students to know how to prepare better for college. Owing to their number and "local" nature, two-year colleges will continue to represent the vision of college to most school students.

The success of the two-year colleges in their efforts will determine to a great extent how well a large proportion of our population is served by higher education. The recommendations of the SREB Commission for Educational Quality suggest specific ways these two-year colleges can better serve their students, who represent a wide range of academic achievement and skills.

These recommendations should become the agenda for serious discussion in states as educational and governmental leaders deal forthrightly with improving undergraduate education in their two-year colleges. It is with this expectation that the following report and recommendations are presented.

Winfred L. Godwin
President

Importance of the Two-Year College

Half of this nation's college freshmen begin their collegiate experience in two-year colleges. In some SREB states, nearly two-thirds of teacher education graduates start their baccalaureate studies at a two-year institution. In addition, the two-year college has played the principal role in providing access to undergraduate education, especially for less prepared and economically disadvantaged students. A significant proportion of college graduates would not have had an opportunity to attend college had it not been for the nearby open-door two-year college that had low tuition.

Meeting a new challenge: maintaining access and raising standards

Indeed, the two-year college has been the "local" college—the institution with which most high school students identify and for which most students prepare. It has become synonymous with "open-door" and ready access to advanced education for all who seek it.

But a new challenge is clear: While the advances made in providing access must be retained, standards for college study in all institutions must be raised. As enrollments level off in many states, regional senior colleges and universities are looking to students who in the past would have enrolled in two-year colleges. Many of these institutions are relatively non-selective but convey the image of having higher standards than two-year colleges (which is true in some cases and not in others).

Several trends combine to underscore the need for the two-year college and its diverse programs even more than in the past.

- A great proportion of high school graduates need remedial education before they can begin college-level study. As more states acknowledge this huge problem, they will turn to the two-year college for help.
- Students entering technologically-complex occupations must be better prepared.

- Increased proportions of potential college students are educationally, socially, or economically disadvantaged. They need access to an institution that is low-cost and specializes in offering a variety of educational and personal support services.

- The two-year college is being looked to as a center for adult basic and high school education to address the needs of the functionally illiterate and school dropouts.

- The two-year college is well-positioned to strengthen the links between schools and colleges, which is essential to increasing students' readiness for college.

Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education

As concern has grown about the quality of undergraduate education, more questions are being asked about the preparation that students who transfer to senior institutions receive in two-year colleges.

Are students from two-year colleges ready for upper-level coursework?

Until recently, course grades in upper-division coursework were the only indicators of the earlier preparation of two-year college transfer students. Over the years a number of individual studies based on grades reported that, in general, two-year college transfer students did satisfactorily at four-year colleges. Now, the performance of two-year and senior college sophomores on standardized, external assessments (such as Florida's College Level Academic Skills Test and Georgia's Regents' Test) are providing a second indicator—and two-year college graduates as a group do not do as well on these assessments as students in the four-year colleges. These findings bear out a concern that many two-year college students, given their need for pre-college preparation, may not be brought far enough academically in two-year colleges to be on a par with juniors who entered senior colleges as better prepared freshmen.

There also is continuing doubt in some quarters about the great diversity in the mission of the two-year college, especially the wide range of

students admitted and the wide array of programs offered—from adult basic to undergraduate education.

Undergraduate education is now facing several problems that must be addressed comprehensively in each state.

Establishing standards for degree-credit study

- *Undergraduate study and degrees lack meaning.* Standards for beginning degree-credit study vary to the widest extent possible, even among open-door colleges in the same state. Course grading practices vary and, over the past 15 years, have become greatly inflated. Few institutions assess student performance in any way beyond course evaluation by the faculty.

- *The "quality gap" between the few selective and the many less selective institutions has widened over the past few years.* As less selective colleges provided access to students with increasingly lower levels of preparation, standards were lowered giving all students the right to succeed or fail no matter what their level of preparation.

- *The effects of open-admission have not been addressed squarely.* Open admission does not have to mean immediate placement into degree-credit study. Admitting any high school graduate into study earning credit toward a bachelor's degree has resulted in college classrooms filled with students with wide ranges of preparation and academic skills. Faculty have been faced with instructing in the same class students who read at the eighth-grade level and others who read at the twelfth-grade level. Because of the great spread of student skills and preparation, an effective learning environment could not be established; neither student nor faculty has had the opportunity to succeed.

Stronger Placement Policies for Students Entering College

The quality of undergraduate education in the two-year college depends greatly upon how the diverse kinds of students are directed through the curriculum. A recent SREB study documented the wide ranges of assessments and qualifying scores used by two-year colleges from state to state

and within the same state to determine whether students could begin degree-credit study. A 1986 survey conducted by the American College Testing Program and the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges found that only one-half of the nation's two-year colleges require post-admission placement testing *and* mandatory placement in remedial programs.

Two-year colleges have the most to gain by moving toward what Robert McCabe, president of Miami-Dade Community College, refers to as a "controlled-flow approach" to student placement. Directing students into the program that suits their preparation level permits two-year colleges to maintain open admission while raising standards for undergraduate education. Timing a student's entry into degree-credit study according to readiness enables faculty to meet the needs of different kinds of students more effectively and allows the college to bring students up to a level that permits college-level work, thus increasing students' chances for success.

Essential: placement standards for both academic and occupational programs

Students entering associate degree study in two-year colleges fall into two broad categories: those expecting to complete a program for transfer to a four-year college where they will earn baccalaureate degrees and those who are expecting to complete a program that will equip them for immediate employment.

Two-year colleges need to establish separate placement standards to determine students' readiness for each type of associate degree program. Those students who are unprepared should be placed in remedial programs and two-year colleges must be sure that these students have acquired the necessary skills before being permitted to begin associate degree-earning study.

As two-year colleges develop standards and assessments directed to their diverse student body, they must be sure that transferable credits are awarded only to students who meet the standards for undergraduate transfer programs. Standards for students seeking placement in occupational programs may be at a lower level, but should assure that these students possess the learning skills needed to begin occupational programs.

A statewide role in coordinating the placement procedures is needed:

- To assure that clear signals are sent to all public schools and their students about what skills will be required to begin college.

- To identify the vast extent of the problem of students who are unprepared for college. Only by applying some common standards at all institutions are states able to see the magnitude of the preparation problem. The few states that have applied statewide standards have found that 40 to 50 percent of entering freshmen require remedial education.

- To increase public confidence in the less selective or open-door colleges and universities. The perception is growing that the degrees offered by open-door colleges and universities are less valuable, further widening the already considerable gap between the selective and non-selective institutions. Unless something is done to raise standards, this gap will increase as selective institutions raise their standards even higher.

Statewide standards and assessment for placement in degree-credit study need not impinge upon institutional diversity and initiative; state policy can encourage individual institutions to exceed the statewide minimum placement standards.

The following recommendations for student placement are directed to all two-year colleges within each state:

1 Two-year colleges should identify and implement standards and assessments for placement of all students in associate degree programs in which credits are earned toward the baccalaureate degree and are transferable to senior institutions. These standards and assessments should relate to those competencies students need for study leading to a baccalaureate degree.

2 Faculty should play a vital role in determining the nature of those standards and assessments. The standards and assessments should be evaluated periodically by groups of institutions and faculty to determine their validity in indicating readiness for baccalaureate study.

3 Efforts of the individual institutions should be coordinated statewide to assure a common, educationally defensible meaning for baccalaureate study.

4 States should support the role of two-year colleges as the primary providers of post-high school college preparatory education.

5 Students who do not qualify for placement in associate degree-credit programs should be directed to separate remedial courses for which no degree credit should be granted. Exit standards and assessments should be set for these post-high school preparatory programs. They should be based on outcomes and should be as high as the original placement standards.

6 Standards and assessments should be developed for associate degree programs that are oriented to immediate employment. These standards should reflect the level of learning skills needed to begin preparation in specific occupational programs.

Two-Year Colleges and the Schools

The two-year college needs to refine and strengthen its relationship with the secondary schools from which it draws its students. It can and should become a more active member of a partnership that provides stronger direction, encouragement, and guidance to high school students in meeting higher academic standards.

Directing high school students' attention to college standards

More than half of high school seniors say they plan to attend college, but only about 35 percent of high school students are in programs that prepare them for college study. As college standards are raised, tens of thousands of students will need stronger preparation if their access to college is to be maintained and made worthwhile.

The students most needing clear signals about how to prepare for college tend to share the following characteristics:

- They fall below the top one-third of high school students in academic achievement and motivation.
- They are predominantly in general and vocational programs, which include over 60 percent of all high school students.
- They are disproportionately minority and are socially, educationally, or economically disadvantaged.

- They may not have within their homes role models who can tell them what to expect in college and how to prepare for it.

Communicating the difference between open admission and readiness for undergraduate education

Two-year colleges should be more explicit in communicating to students the impact of inadequate high school preparation—the difference between an "open door" and possessing the skills needed to meet the standards for beginning college-level coursework. In states where entry testing has been implemented, the following is almost universally true:

- More than half of the students entering two-year colleges need additional coursework in preparation for college-level courses.
- As many as 80 percent of incoming students need additional preparation in mathematics—many have little more than arithmetic skills.
- Many students require two or more semesters of additional work to advance from 5th and 6th grade reading levels.

The solutions to these difficulties require a strong partnership between the two-year college and the high schools. In Florida, for example, each community college board of trustees and the local school boards must establish an "articulation committee" comprised of key staff from the schools and college.

The following recommendations are directed to establishing links between the two-year colleges and the schools:

7 A structure for communicating between the faculty and staff of two-year colleges and local schools should be established.

Through a joint coordinating structure:

8 The communication and computation skill levels needed for placement in two-year college associate degree programs should be conveyed to high school staff and students. The two-year college should explain to schools how entering students are assessed.

9 School and two-year college faculty should determine how the learning skills indicated in the placement standards can be identified and incorporated into school curriculum, instruction, and assessments beginning at the earliest possible stage (certainly no later than the ninth grade).

10 Specific assessment procedures should be established that indicate to all high school students as early as possible the progress they are making in developing the skills needed for college. A new form of assessment should be considered—one that might include common tests which measure skills expected at each grade level.

11 Two-year colleges should develop standard and detailed counseling manuals that can be distributed to every high school counselor in the service district. The manuals should contain the most up-to-date facts about the college and its admission and placement practices.

12 Two-year colleges and schools should undertake activities that bring together faculty from both sectors for in-service training. Workshops to explore the continuity of learning from each level in the educational system to higher levels should be the first order of business.

13 Two-year colleges and schools should support procedures—such as advanced placement, dual credit, and early admission courses—to assist high schools in challenging motivated and capable students.

14 Two-year colleges should develop means for recognizing the academic achievements of the best high school students. Scholarship or fee waiver programs to attract the strongest students to the two-year college have been popular and beneficial in raising academic performance expectations.

15 Transitional programs—including summer courses, "survival skills," or orientation seminars—should be established to minimize the personal or social impediments to success in the two-year college.

16 Two-year colleges and high schools should collaborate on a series of standard reports that describe the nature of the students entering the college each year. Descriptive information that addresses high school preparation and college performance should be identified and shared so that schools will have concrete evidence for making needed curricular and counseling adjustments.

Associate Degree Program Standards and Assessments

Setting standards for college performance

Two-year colleges are positioned to play a crucial role in strengthening the links between postsecondary education and the schools, and must be strong partners in making clearer the standards that mark progression through undergraduate study, especially from lower- to upper-division study.

The reputation and credibility of the two-year college's role in undergraduate education will be determined by the extent to which it insists that its students meet strong, publicly-recognized performance standards. Most efforts to improve undergraduate education have focused on the need for student assessment. Assessment is a means to generate information that can identify the strengths and weaknesses of instruction, but to be effective it must measure student performance against identified standards.

Beyond course grading, few two-year colleges systematically assess students after they have entered. Because grades are determined course-by-course, they are not tied to the same levels or kinds of performance from one institution to another, nor do they provide insight into whether students have acquired the competencies associated with the degree.

As a step toward re-establishing the meaning of course grades as reliable, consistent indicators of student competency, greater attention should be focused on the nature and levels of student performance expected in undergraduate study in the two-year college. At least for a time, some form of assessment that is external to course grading would be helpful in realigning course grades to reflect higher standards.

Assessment beyond course grades

Two-year colleges need to establish performance standards as a first step in improving quality. With established standards, assessments can be developed that will provide information on student performance. Collected over time, such information will provide guidance for improving programs.

Leadership throughout higher education is badly needed to focus attention on the nature and levels of student competencies that should be developed in undergraduate education. The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) and others concerned with the quality of the two-year college already are promoting a greater focus on outcomes. The AACJC Task Force on the Associate Degree recommended that: "Competency standards should be developed for all students seeking the associate degree. They should reflect consistently high standards, with progress from one level of the program to another monitored in terms of carefully evaluated performance. Testing throughout the degree program would ensure that high standards are reached and maintained."

How colleges benefit from student performance standards

Acting on this recommendation would bring many benefits to the two-year college. Specifically, more objective measures of student performance would:

- Provide a basis for revitalizing course grading practices;
- Show that students are ready to transfer;
- Provide institutional accountability to the public;
- Provide a sound basis for improving the curriculum, instruction in essential learning skills, and outcomes.

Two-year colleges must decide whether to establish one set of standards and assessments for exit from all associate degree programs or to have different sets for individual programs. The decision should be based on what would be most effective in helping students to achieve their goals.

Relating standards to expected outcomes

The three associate degree programs are the Associate in Arts (A.A.), the Associate in Science (A.S.), and the Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.). The A.A. and A.S. degrees are normally academically-based; the A.S. requires more math and science study. In most two-year college systems these degree programs are oriented to transfer to upper-division undergraduate programs. A.A.S. programs are occupationally-based and prepare students for immediate employment; less general or academic coursework is required to earn the A.A.S.

When the purposes and expected outcomes of various associate degree programs vary significantly, standards and related assessments should

reflect these differences. For example, some A.S. programs may require their own standards and assessments, especially in pre-professional educational fields, such as pre-engineering and nursing.

An issue in many two-year colleges concerns the level of general education standards that should be developed for the students in occupational programs. Compared to the transfer programs, A.A.S. programs focus more on skills related to specific occupations. However, standards also must be set for the academic or intellectual competencies. These competencies are needed for effective employment and students at some time in the future may undertake further academic undergraduate education. Thus, students in A.A.S. programs should be expected to meet standards for general education competencies, especially in the critical areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. A carefully developed level of standard could recognize and support the value of these skills. In setting different standards for students in occupational programs, the exit standards should never be any lower than those required for initial placement in degree-credit academic transfer programs.

Needed: statewide policy plus institutional initiatives

Two-year colleges that initiate the development of standards and assessments will greatly strengthen their position and credibility. There is no question that two-year colleges and their faculties are best able to determine the nature of the outcomes, standards, and assessments for their various programs. It is also true that if they do not begin to take actions directed to quality improvement, other concerned parties will.

This imperative for institutional action, however, does not remove the need for some dimension of statewide action and policy in the process of setting standards and assessing students. State policy concerning the assessment of associate degree student performance is needed to assure the public that the threshold standards for degree-credit work apply to all colleges and that similar standards and procedures for assessment are adopted. This also will serve to limit the gap in standards among the selective and non-selective institutions in a state system.

The involvement of statewide policy can be satisfied and institutional initiative and diversity preserved through approaches that combine statewide and institutional interests. There are two possible approaches.

By encouraging all two-year colleges to act as a group, agreeing on the nature and levels of student competency standards for various programs, states could then expect agreement on common ways to assess student

performance with respect to these standards. This common approach can work if the standards and assessments are viewed as minimum, or threshold, measures and their purpose is to determine whether students have mastered certain essential skills or knowledge. At the same time the state must encourage individual institutions (perhaps through state funding incentives) to set higher standards and carry out more rigorous assessments on their own.

Another approach is for state policy to include, upon the recommendations of institutions as a group, a core of minimum standards. Individual two-year colleges then would establish their own standards and would develop their own ways to assess student performance. A state-level body, relying upon recommendations of a committee of institutional representatives, would certify that the standards at each individual two-year college meet or exceed the statewide core. The state-level role would also entail monitoring individual institutional assessments to determine whether performance levels assure that the minimum standards are met.

To determine the effectiveness of programs in the two-year college, the following recommendations are made:

17 Each two-year college should establish performance standards for its associate degree programs and develop systematic ways to assess the performance of all students. Students should be expected to meet these standards to qualify for the degree. As with the development of placement standards and assessments, faculty should play a vital role in the development of performance standards. These standards should be evaluated periodically to determine their validity in indicating that students are qualified to receive the associate degree.

18 The standards and assessments should reflect differences in the purposes and expected outcomes of various associate degree programs. The standards of transfer-oriented associate degree programs should signify readiness to begin study in the upper-division. The standards of employment-related programs should include levels of general educational competencies that would permit students to enter the job market immediately and enable them to meet requirements for placement in academic undergraduate programs.

19 The degree standards set by individual two-year colleges should be reviewed to assure that certain essential competency standards meet or exceed a statewide threshold. These essential standards should be defined by a statewide group composed of institutional representatives.

Improving Undergraduate Education for the Transfer Student

The quality and efficiency of undergraduate education for the two-year college transfer student may be judged by the extent to which course credits from any two-year college can be readily transferred to senior institutions. Students benefit greatly from knowing beforehand which credits will transfer—and which will not.

The following recommendations are offered as initial steps states should take to improve transfer programs:

20 States should require their two-year colleges and senior institutions to develop a core of lower-division courses that would be equivalent in content and standards and would be routinely transferable statewide. The core should be expanded through continuing discussion between the two-year and senior colleges.

21 A joint statewide committee composed of faculty and staff representatives from two-year colleges and senior institutions should be formally established to coordinate the identification of equivalent courses.

22 Transfer credit for the core courses should be granted by all senior institutions.

Faculties of two-year colleges and senior institutions must work together

While the above steps would help to improve the efficiency with which students transfer, there is an even greater need affecting the quality of these transfer programs. Some states already have good procedures for the smooth movement of students from the two-year colleges to the senior institutions. These procedures are based upon formal articulation agreements and advisory processes. On a substantive level, however, the link between two-year colleges and senior institutions may not be as effective as it should be because faculty from the different segments too often do not communicate or jointly plan programs. Under these conditions, the continuity of academic programs suffers and the effectiveness of a transfer program is weakened.

Teaching and learning are more effective when faculty and students understand the full scope and learning sequences of academic programs. When transfer is involved, only faculty can see to it that the scope, sequence, and evaluation of student programs are made whole and understandable. The need for better continuity in academic and occupational programs for students who transfer poses a serious challenge in most states.

The following recommendation is aimed at strengthening communication and collaboration between faculty from two-year colleges and senior institutions:

23 Faculty and staff in two-year colleges and senior institutions should be encouraged to: undertake joint planning of academic programs; follow up on the academic, intellectual, and social development of transfer students; use student follow-up information in making program decisions and advising students; clarify academic expectations and standards at points of transfer and periodically evaluate the validity of these standards; and develop joint data on the needs and demand for each level of programs in which typically the two-year college provides the first level of education and the four-year institution, advanced study.

The linkages between two-year colleges and senior institutions will be strengthened with certain structural and procedural changes to support the above actions. The main focus for improving articulation should be at the institutional level—two-year colleges and senior institutions should work out details concerning their common interests. Typically, a large majority of a two-year college's students transfer to one of two or three four-year institutions. This makes it cost-effective for a two-year college to focus on faculty and program linkages with a limited number of institutions. The institutions in these common-interest groups often fall within the same geographical area, supporting a regional approach to strengthening linkages. Thus, articulation will be improved with the development of full curricular agreements (course-by-course detail) for specific programs in pairs of institutions.

The following recommendation is aimed at improving cooperation between two-year colleges and senior institutions:

24 Cooperation should be pursued through local consortia or other institutional arrangements and organized networks of faculty and professional staff in similar disciplines to share teaching approaches and subject content.

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